

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

185

The only deaths I heard about or witnessed were all attributed to human sorcery so that I have no information on the Cubeo response to natural death or to death attributed to spirits. Mourning is extensive but does not impose unusually onerous duties or restrictions upon the survivors. Mourning goes through three phases. In the first, from the moment of death to burial, which follows quickly, the immediate kin and all sIBMates yield to their spontaneous emotions, but up to a point, for the ritualization of emotion sets in quickly. In the second, which is the period from burial to the great mourning ceremony, the nearest female kin of the household — wife, mother, sister — accept the burden of mourning. Finally, in the third phase, the entire living cosmos of the Cubeo — people, Ancients, birds, beasts, fish, insects, and demons — join in the mourning. This third phase, an intricate ceremony, is described in a separate chapter. The dead, as already indicated, are buried beneath the dance floor of the house, emphasizing, it seems to me, the importance the Cubeo place on the house itself rather than upon mere locality.

I was present at the last hours of old João, a *Bahikiwa* and *bahūdyi* of the headman. He had been ill for several weeks, the medicine men had given up on him, and his death was, therefore, not unexpected. The Cubeo are not solicitous of the dying. Once its inevitability has been accepted death is awaited almost with indifference. Father Giaccone (1949, p. 29), speaking for the neighboring Tucano, also observed that once the illness appears to be fatal the patient is given up for lost. Such patients, he adds, will be buried alive. When death seemed near — the old man was breathing with difficulty with a dry rasp — his wife took up the death watch at his hammock. At the moment of death her loud wailing awakened the house and all rushed to surround the hammock except the headman and his wife. Since it is the duty of the headman to preside over the inquest that follows upon the first outburst of grief he must plan upon a properly timed arrival. A shaman of another sib who was in the house also did not intrude upon the mourners, both in his role as shaman and as a sib outsider.

The old woman, truly grief-stricken, had embraced her dead husband's body in the hammock and rocked over it, moaning and wailing. She withdrew, however, when the younger brother of João arrived. He felt for the heartbeat and then covered the old man's face with some rags that had been the sick man's blanket. The women had all gathered to one side of the hammock and they wept continuously, chorusing the loud and emphatic wailing of the widow. The brother fetched his shotgun, moving slowly and grimly. He loaded